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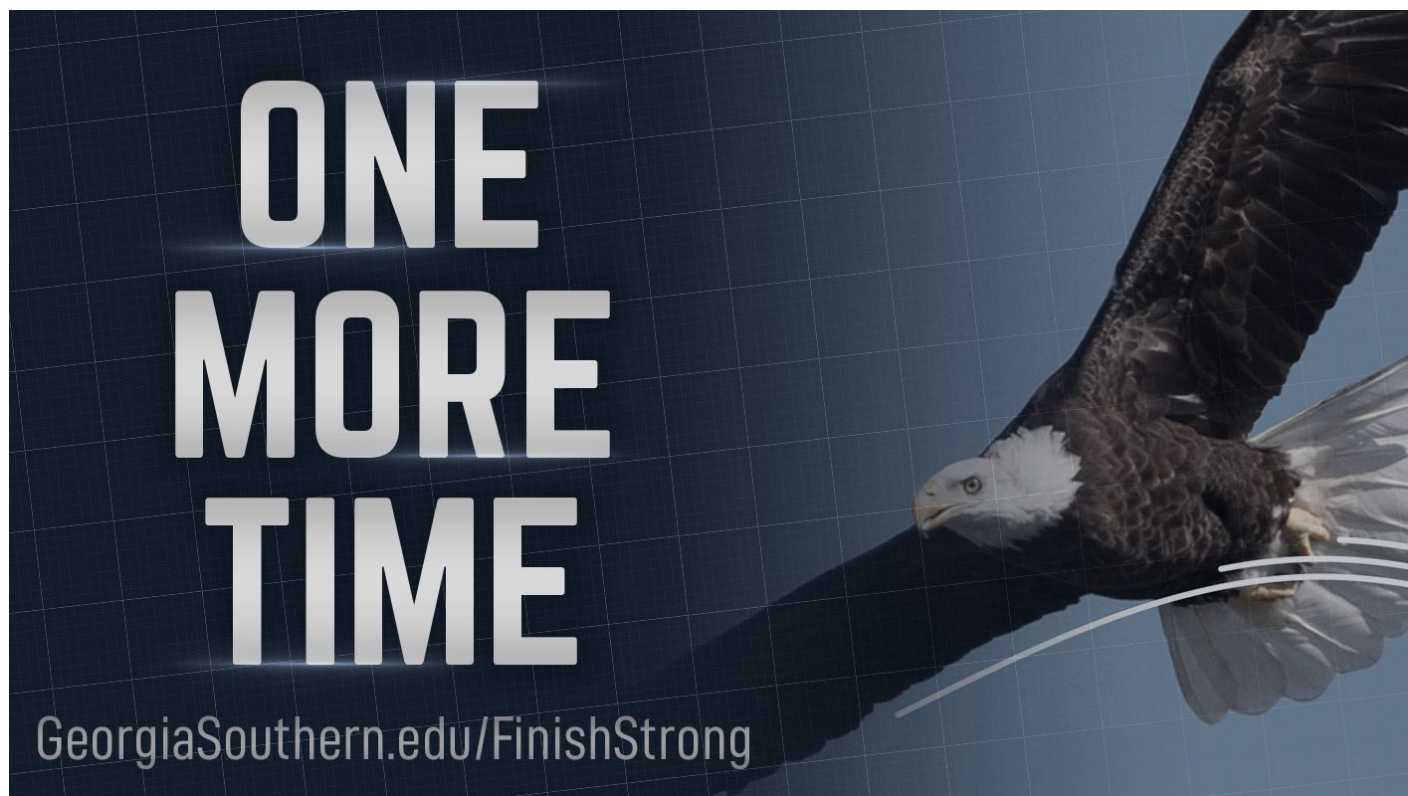
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Georgia Southern's Jared Benko Announces School Will Welcome Back Spring Sport Seniors

Up to 14 Seniors Expected to Return for Additional Season

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STATESBORO – Georgia Southern will welcome back up to 14 spring sport

ONE MORE TIME FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN

seniors who saw their 2019-20 collegiate season cut short due to the COVID-19 pandemic. These seniors will return for an additional season of competition for the Eagles, Director of Athletics [Jared Benko](#) has announced.

"It's the right thing to do; it's something that we wanted to do," Benko said. "Dr. [Kyle] Marrero and everyone on our leadership staff were very supportive of ensuring that these seniors, these young

men and women, have the chance to come back and truly have a fitting senior year.

"Student-athlete experience is paramount at Georgia Southern and any time we can do right by our student-athletes, we're going to do that," Benko continued. "This move will allow some student-athletes to graduate, some will work toward their graduate degree and all of them will be afforded the opportunity to end their collegiate careers on their field or court of play."

The NCAA Division I Council voted on March 30, 2020, to allow schools to provide spring-sport student-athletes an additional season of competition and an extension of their period of eligibility. Financial aid rules were adjusted to allow teams to carry more members on scholarship to account for incoming student-athletes and returning student-athletes who had been in their last year of eligibility who decide to stay.

The Council vote provided schools with the flexibility to give students the opportunity to return for 2020-21 without requiring that athletics aid be provided at the same level awarded for 2019-20.

Upon the vote from the Council, Benko and his staff first met with head coaches of spring sports to see how many senior student-athletes would be interested in returning for the 2020-21 academic year. Georgia Southern's spring sports rosters included 21 scholarship seniors, 14 of whom have committed to returning next season or are still making their decision. The total cost of the aid is expected to be around \$140,000 and will come from fundraising and prudent cost-cutting in other areas. Spring sports with student-athletes expected to return include baseball, softball, men's and women's tennis, as well as men's and women's golf.

Benko informed the spring head coaches of the decision in mid-April and requested the head coaches share this exciting news with their players.

Today, Georgia Southern University launched a fundraising campaign to help students facing financial hardships during these unprecedented times.

The University kicked off the "Ensure Our Eagles Finish Strong" campaign with a goal of raising \$250,000 for up to 250 students on a need-based priority, as well as \$140,000 to assist up to 14

returning spring sport seniors who saw their 2019-20 collegiate seasons cut short.

"The Eagle Nation family cares deeply for this University and its students," stated Georgia Southern President Kyle Marrero. "We invite them to support our mission of providing transformative learning opportunities, and contribute to the success of our students as they continue on their educational paths."

For traditional students, the money raised will keep them from dropping out due to a lack of funding. For student-athletes, the campaign will ensure they can finish their seasons and reach their athletics goals.

The "Ensure Our Eagles Finish Strong" campaign will run through July 2. For more information or to give online visit GeorgiaSouthern.edu/FinishStrong.

Georgia Southern Athletics provides current information on all its sports through its official website, GSEagles.com, which is fully responsive across all mobile devices. Information on Eagle athletics can also be found through social media channels facebook.com/GSAthletics, twitter.com/GSAthletics and Instagram.com/GSAthletics. To purchase tickets to Georgia Southern athletics events, visit GSEagles.com/tickets.

In order to expedite entry and provide a safe environment for all patrons and participants, Georgia Southern Athletics has implemented a Clear Bag Policy for all ticketed sporting events. Fans can find the complete policy as well as an FAQ section at GSEagles.com/ClearBag.